

REMARKS

The Examiner has objected to the length of the Abstract. Appropriate amendment has been made to overcome this objection.

Claims 1-25 are currently pending in the application. New claims 26-28 are presented for consideration.

Claims 5-7 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claim 5 has been rewritten in independent form so as to be allowable. Claims 6 and 7 each depend from rewritten claim 5 so as to likewise be allowable.

Claims 1-4, 12-14, 17 and 19-25 stand rejected under 35 USC §102 as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,926,910, to Nishimura et al (Nishimura). Claims 1-3 and 8-12 stand rejected under 35 USC §102 as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 1,951,754 (Gilbert).

Reconsideration of the rejection of claims 1-4 and 8-25, and favorable consideration of new claims 25-27 are requested.

Claim 1 has been amended to characterize one of the first and second portions as having a third circumferentially facing surface that confronts one of a) one of the first and second circumferentially facing surfaces on the other of the first and second portions and b) a fourth circumferentially facing surface on the other of the first and second portions, with the first and second tubular elements relatively moved around the first and second axis from the first relative rotational position past the second relative rotational position into a third relative rotational position, to thereby block relative movement of the first and

second tubular elements in the third relative rotational position back into the second relative rotational position.

Neither Nishimura nor Gilbert teaches or suggests any corresponding third relative rotational position between allegedly corresponding first and second tubular elements. Consequently, the structure to accomplish this is not taught or suggested in either cited reference.

Claims 2-4 and 8-20 depend cognately from claim 1 and recite further significant structural detail to further distinguish over the prior art.

Claim 21 has been amended to characterize the frictional force generated between the radially inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces on the first and second portions as greater in the second relative axial position than in the first relative axial position.

Both cited references are silent with respect to the frictional forces between corresponding inwardly and outwardly facing surfaces.

Claims 22-25 each depends from claim 20 and recite further significant limitations to further distinguish over the prior art.

Claim 26 includes the limitations of claim 1, as originally presented. Additionally, the first and second tubular elements are recited to be positionable in a second relative axial position wherein relative movement of the first and second tubular elements from the first relative rotational position into the second relative rotational position causes the first and second connecting assemblies to draw the first and second portions axially towards each other further than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative axial position and the first and second tubular elements moved from the first relative rotational

position into the second relative rotational position. The radially outwardly facing surfaces on the first tubular element and radially inwardly facing surface on the second tubular element are relatively dimensioned so that the radially outwardly facing surface and radially inwardly facing surface are urged against each other with a frictional force that is greater with the first and second tubular elements in the second relative rotational position than with the first and second tubular elements in the first relative rotational position.

Only Gilbert shows structure which allows tubular elements to be placed in corresponding first and second relative axial positions. Gilbert is concerned only with height adjustment and does not address a holding force between two cooperating tubular elements disclosed therein.

The significance of the structure claimed is described in applicant's specification at page 28, in the last full paragraph, and on page 29, in the first full paragraph. Neither reference addresses this problem and consequently neither suggests a solution thereto.

Claim 27 corresponds to claim 2, as originally presented, and further characterizes the first groove as having a substantially uniform width.

Claim 28, which depends from claim 27, characterizes the first radially outwardly extending projection as having an elongate shape with a length. The projection moves in a direction substantially parallel to the length of the projection as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions.

With this arrangement of elements, potentially smooth and consistent relative guided movement between the first and second tubular elements can occur as the first and second tubular elements are changed between the first and second relative rotational positions therefor.

Gilbert lacks a corresponding groove configuration that serves a similar guiding function. The circumferential portion 33a₂ is characterized as having a width "widening from its innermost" end (see col. 4, lines 9-12).

Reconsideration of claims 1-4 and 8-25, favorable consideration of claims 26-28, and allowance of the case are requested.

The extra claim fee of \$275.00 is enclosed. Should additional fees be required in connection with this matter, please charge our deposit account No. 23-0785.

Respectfully submitted,

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